

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-03 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-07 RSC-01

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 CIAE-00

COME-00 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06

SIL-01 IGA-02 L-03 H-03 AGR-20 SWF-02 PA-04 USIA-15

PRS-01 DRC-01 /185 W

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R 102130Z APR 74

FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3169

INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUAYAQUIL 340

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, EC

SUBJ: LABOR UNIONS PROTEST GOE ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES

REF: QUITO 2052

1. GUAYAQUIL BRANCHES OF ECUDOR'S THREE MAJOR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS HELD JOINT MEETING EVENING OF APRIL 9 TO PROTEST AGAINST RECENTLY ANNOUNCED GOE ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES (REFTEL). LEADERS OF CTE (COMMUNIST ORIENTED), CEDOC (CHURCH ORIENTED), AND CEOSL (DEMOCRATICALLY ORIENTED) ATTEMPTED PRESENT UNITED FRONT OPPOSING APPROVED PRICE INCREASES IN BASIC FOOD STAPLES WHICH WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MEAGER WAGE INCREASES. LEADERS AGREED THAT ALL LOCAL UNIONS WOULD JOINTLY PARTICIPATE IN TRADITIONAL MAY 1 PARADE. MEETING MARRED BY CAT-CALLING FROM FLOOR BY SMALL "CHINESE LINE" GROUP (FRENTE DE LUCHA UNIDA) LED BY BOLIVAR SANDOVAL. THIS GROUP CLAIMED THAT LABOR LEADERS HAD BETRAYED INTERESTS OF WORKERS IN RETURN FOR PAYOFFS FROM GOVERNMENT. HECKLING LED TO SCATTERED FIST FIGHTS AND SANDOVAL AND FOLLOWERS EVENTUALLY EJECTED FROM MEETING.

2. LOCAL LABOR SOURCE STATES THAT TURNOUT FOR MEETING WAS ADEQUATE
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BUT FAR BELOW THAT HOPED FOR BY LABOR LEADERS. HE POINTED OUT

THAT UNITY AMONG LABOR GROUPS WAS MORE APPARENT THAN REAL. CEOSL HAD SOUGHT MUCH MORE MILITANT STANCE, ADVOCATING MARCH THROUGH STREETS AND STRIKES IN ADDITION TO PUBLIC MEETING. CTE, ON OTHER HAND, AGREED TO PARTICIPATE ONLY IF PROTEST WAS LIMITED TO INDOOR SESSION.

3. SOURCES BELIEVES THAT APPEARANCE OF UNITY WILL LAST AT LEAST THROUGH MAY DAY PARADE AND THAT MANIFESTATION WILL BE JOINT EFFORT. (IN RECENT YEARS CTE AND CDOC HAVE HAD ONE PARADE WHILE CEOSL HAS HAD ANOTHER.) PERMISSION FOR PARADE MUST BE GIVEN BY GUAYAS GOVERNMENT

WHO ALSO APPROVES ROUTE OF MARCH. LABOR AND POLICE SOURCES BELIEVE PERMISSION WILL BE GIVEN BUT THAT MARCH WILL BE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED AND STRONG SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WILL BE IN EFFECT.

4. COMMENT. MEETING, ALTHOUGH NOT RESOUNDING SUCCESS FROM LABOR'S POINT OF VIEW, IS A CLEAR PUBLIC REMINDER OF THE PLIGHT OF THE POOR ON THE COAST. RISING FOOD COSTS AND LIMITED WAGE INCREASES HAVE PLACED LABORER IN DIFFICULT POSITION. THIS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN CASE OF RICE WHICH IS THE STAFF OF LIFE FOR COSTENOS. THE POOR NOW HAVE UNPLEASANT CHOICE OF WAITING HOURS IN LINE TO PURCHASE RICE AT 3.20 SUCRES PER POUND FROM GOVERNMENT STORES (WHERE LIMIT IS TWO POUNDS PER CUSTOMER) OR PAYING 5 TO 6 SUCRES PER POUND AT NEIGHBORHOOD MA AND PA GROCERY STORES WHICH EVADE PRICE CONTROLS. PROBLEM MAY GET WORSE IN COMING MONTHS BECAUSE OF DROUGHT ON COAST. BECAUSE OF DEARTH OF TRADITIONAL DECEMBER-MAY RAINFALL, LOCAL AGRICULTURISTS PREDICTING THAT 50 TO 70 PERCENT OF WINTER RICE CROP WILL BE LOST.
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